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ABSTRACT

The Optional Extended Year (OEY) program was initiated in Texas in 1995 and was first implemented in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) in 1996. The OEY is designed to add an extended school year and reduce student retention through four school-day options: (1) extended day; (2) extended week; (3) intersessions for year-round schools; and (4) summer school. Participating schools have latitude in the type of student support that is offered, and the faculty and administration of each school select their own methods of monitoring student performance. In 1998-1999 65 schools (50 elementary and 15 middle schools) offered OEY programs attended by 4,380 students. Retention rates for OEY students increased that year, a fact that is partially explained by an increase in program participation and a change in the OEY promotion policy. Results from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) suggest that the OEY extended week program is particularly successful with middle school students, but no similar pattern could be determined for elementary schools. Overall, however, middle school students who participated in OEY had lower TAAS passing rates than elementary school students. It is suggested that administrators study objective-level TAAS data for program participants when planning future OEY opportunities. (SLD)

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OPTIONAL EXTENDED YEAR PROGRAM

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FEEDBACK

Austin Independent School District

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Optional Extended Year Program

The Optional Extended Year (OEY) program was initiated in Texas in 1995 (Senate Bill 1) and was first implemented in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) in 1996. The noncompetitive grant funds are awarded to Texas public school districts with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. For the 1998-99 school year, 65 schools (50 elementary and 15 middle schools) received OEY funding in AISD. Sixty-two separate OEY programs were offered across these campuses, and 4,830 students participated in the sessions. There were 451 teachers and 136 support staff funded with OEY monies.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

OEY programs are designed to accommodate four school-day options: 1) extended day; 2) extended week; 3) intersessions for year-round schools; and 4) summer school. Table 1 provides information on the number of schools in AISD that offered each of these types of programs between summer 1998 and summer 1999.

Table 1: Number of AISD Schools Participating in Optional Extended Year Activities

	Summer 1998	Extended Day 1998-99	Extended Week 1998-99	Year-Round 1998-99	Summer 1999
Elementary	30	8	2	9	50
Middle School	13	2	1	0	15

All of the schools received supplementary Title I funds, with the exception of seven elementary schools and four middle schools. The participating schools have latitude in the type of student support that is offered in the instructional program. The primary types of student support offered, in order of frequency of use, were as follows: reading skills; mathematics; general language arts; thematic units; writing; complex problem-solving skills; technology; and TAAS objectives. All schools gathered pre/posttest information. The most frequently used pre/posttest measures were TAAS, Brigance, teacher-made tests, PALM, portfolios, and running records. The faculty and administrators for each school program selected their own methods of monitoring student progress in the OEY program. Student portfolios, skills' checklists, and classroom tests were reported to be the most frequently used methods for monitoring student progress.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Administrators and teachers in each program were asked to provide various types of information about the programs and students. Four key areas were: 1) identification of students who completed the program; 2) student promotion and retention data; 3) how students' academic performance was monitored during the program; and 4) how parents were involved in the program.

Program Completion, Student Promotion, and Retention

In total, 4,830 students attended at least one day of the OEY program in the 1998-99 school year, and 3,322 of those students completed the OEY program. Beginning in 1997-98, students who attended OEY activities could be promoted to the next grade if they attended at least 90 percent of the program days and if they satisfied the district's academic requirements for promotion. In prior years, promotion

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was based on attendance only. Table 2 contains information on student promotion and retention across four years, 1995-96 through 1998-99.

Table 2: Number of OEY Students Promoted/Retained by Grade, 1995-96 through 1998-99

	1995-96		1996-97		1997-98		1998-99	
Grade	Promoted	Retained	Promoted	Retained	Promoted	Retained	Promoted	Retained
K	359	1	261	1	195	4	189	0
1	655	7	819	18	673	27	495	7
2	689	7	635	10	636	18	451	9
3	595	6	581	1	590	5	811	9
4	469	2	528	5	485	9	785	8
5	156	0	359	3	237	5	527	5
6	192	0	286	0	477	0	467	45
7	332	0	329	0	625	0	526	48
8	267	0	322	0	524	0	424	24
Total	3,714	23	4,120	38	4,442	68	4,675	155

Review of the retention figures in Table 2 indicates that a small number of elementary students have been retained each year, but the 1998-99 school year was the first time that middle school students who participated in the OEY program were also retained. Of the 155 OEY participants that were retained in the 1998-99 school year, 6% met academic but not attendance requirements, 10% met attendance but not academic requirements, 81% met neither attendance nor academic requirements, and 3% were retained at their parents' request. 1999-2000 student records indicate that 25 of the middle school students who were reported as being retained are currently "inactive" (i.e., they did not enter an AISD school in fall 2000). *It is recommended that an investigation be conducted to provide an explanation for the reported increase in middle school retention.*

Parent Involvement

Each campus was asked to provide information regarding how parents were informed about the availability of the OEY program, the frequency of meetings with the parents, and how parents assisted in the program's operation. Survey responses indicate that flyers, letters, or telephone calls were the most frequently used methods of communication to inform parents about the OEY program. Parent meetings were typically held at the beginning and end of an OEY program. Further, parents were most often used at the primary level (K-2) where they served as teacher aides and transition assistants.

Program Results

TEA required each district that received OEY funds to report basic demographic information about the students who participated in program activities, along with information on the numbers of students who were retained or promoted as a result of their participation. In addition, AISD examined achievement data for program participants who took the TAAS test in grades 3-8 in school year 1998-99. Achievement data for participants in summer 1999 activities are not included in this report.

Although the majority of schools used their OEY funds to provide either spring intersession or summer school activities for their students, there were enough students at most grade levels who participated in extended day and week activities to make data analyses across all programs possible. Tables 3 and 4 contain information on percentage of students passing TAAS by grade, subject, and type of OEY program. Configurations containing fewer than five students are not included in the analyses. Also, note that because there are no middle school participants in the AISD year-round program, Table 4 does not contain spring intersession data.

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Table 3: Percent of Elementary School OEY Participants Who Passed TAAS in 1999

Grade	1998-99 Reading Programs			1998-99 Mathematics Programs		
	Day	Spring Intersession	Week	Day	Spring Intersession	Week
3	67	63	60	60	62	50
4	56	*	54	61	60	66
5	73	69	47	73	78	57
6	66	43	*	58	76	*

Note: Asterisk in program column indicates there are not enough students to report for the grade level.

Table 4: Percent of Middle School OEY Participants Who Passed TAAS in 1999

Grade	1998-99 Reading Programs		1998-99 Mathematics Program	
	Day	Week	Day	Week
6	46	79	*	95
7	69	64	47	45
8	*	100	65	100

Note: Asterisk in program column indicates there are not enough students to report for the grade level.

Examination of TAAS data in Tables 3 and 4 indicates no clear pattern across grades and programs. Table 3 shows the highest pass rate for TAAS reading was for extended day students at grade 5, while the highest pass rate for TAAS mathematics was for spring intersession students at grade 5. In terms of middle school student performance on TAAS, Table 4 indicates that the extended week program at grade 8 was particularly successful. When data are examined for TAAS All Tests Taken, the highest passing rate for elementary school is for students served by spring intersession. Similarly, the highest passing rate for middle school is for students served through extended week. *It is recommended that the grade 8 extended week program be examined in greater detail to determine the factors that are responsible for the high pass rates on TAAS for the program's participants.*

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

During the 1998-99 school year, 4,830 AISD students participated in the OEY program. Retention rates for program participants increased during the past year, and this is partially explained by an increase in program participation and a change in the OEY promotion policy. When TAAS scores were examined for students who participated in the various optional extended year programs that were offered in AISD, it appears that the extended week program was particularly successful with middle school students, but no similar pattern could be detected for elementary students who participated in OEY activities. However, overall middle school OEY participants had lower passing rates on TAAS than did elementary students. It would be useful for OEY administrators to examine objective-level TAAS data for program participants when planning future extended year activities in order to provide the most beneficial assistance to their students.

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